

VZCZCXRO5545
OO RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM
DE RUEHBK #6241/01 2841057
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 111057Z OCT 06
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2246
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 6168
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 2220
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHFJSCC/COMMARFORPAC
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 006241

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/11/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [MOPS](#) [KDEM](#) [TH](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR PRESSES CNS TO LIFT MARTIAL LAW,
ACCELERATE ELECTIONS

Classified By: Ambassador Ralph L. Boyce, reason 1.4 (b) (d)

SUMMARY

1. (C) The Ambassador met October 11 with Council for National Security (CNS) Secretary General Winai Phattiyakul to press for an acceleration of the existing timetable for elections, the lifting of martial law and the full restoration of civil liberties as soon as possible. Winai promised the RTG would lift martial law no later than the end of November; the Ambassador pressed for speedier action. Winai took on board the other points. Winai also said the 1997 Constitution was likely to provide the basis for Thailand's next charter. The Ambassador offered USG help in accelerating the return to democracy. End Summary.

URGING FASTER PROGRESS

2. (C) The Ambassador called on CNS Secretary General Winai Phattiyakul, who concurrently serves as Defense Ministry Permanent Secretary, to emphasize USG interest in a full and speedy return of democracy. The Ambassador expressed concern over the existing one-year timeframe for democratization. He urged Winai to consider moving more quickly to lift martial law, end all recently imposed restrictions on civil liberties, and accelerate the timetable for the next election.

3. (C) Winai said the overall political timetable remained unchanged from the night of the coup; the CNS expected a free and fair election within one year. Thai legal experts had recommended a period of eight months and 15 days to complete a new constitution, which would be followed by elections. The Ambassador asked whether the 1997 Constitution would form the basis of the new version. Winai said that this was the most likely case; starting from scratch would take too long. The constitution drafters would certainly choose a prior charter -- probably the 1997 one -- as a model. However, Winai said he could not estimate how many articles would need revision. The Ambassador welcomed the likelihood that the 1997 Constitution would represent the starting point for the drafters, and he remarked that this should enable the drafters to complete their work quickly enough to permit elections prior to the one-year mark.

LIFTING MARTIAL LAW

14. (C) Interim Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont had told the Ambassador he intended to lift martial law around the time that he named the cabinet, the Ambassador informed Winai. Now this date appeared to be slipping. Lifting martial law would represent a very positive step. Winai responded that the CNS would lift martial law no later than the end of November, implying with his tone that this step could come earlier. The Ambassador noted the desirability of ending martial law sometime in October. This would set a positive tone for the November 18 APEC summit. Winai acknowledged the logic of this approach.

15. (C) The Ambassador also highlighted potential actions that would mark a significant setback: the detention without charge of Thaksin administration officials, crackdowns on peaceful demonstrations, and impeding the work of the courts. Such actions by the RTG would lead to the USG considering further measures to show American disapproval. On the other hand, the USG would welcome timely, concrete actions by the RTG to show the military was removing itself from the political sphere. The USG would be willing to help the RTG accelerate this process, if the RTG sought international assistance with constitution drafting or the conduct of elections.

16. (C) The RTG could demonstrate its stated commitment to restore civilian government if it were to announce an end to recent restrictions on civil liberties, the Ambassador said, specifically citing restrictions on political party activities and on political gatherings of five or more people. Winai replied that these restrictions were a component of martial law and would be automatically lifted by the rescission of martial law. Winai noted the RTG had already

BANGKOK 00006241 002 OF 002

lifted all restrictions on the media. The Ambassador urged that the RTG publicize fully the steps it had taken and would take next, noting that announcing the lifting of martial law and clarifying explicitly that political gatherings were permissible would have a salutary effect.

INTERIM LEGISLATURE EXPECTED THIS WEEK

17. (C) The Ambassador asked about the status of the interim legislature. Winai explained that the CNS had already completed a list of 250 members; he expected the King would approve this list before the end of the current week. The Ambassador interjected that the formation of the legislature might provide a useful occasion for RTG announcement of an accelerated timeframe for returning to democracy.

COMMENT

18. (C) Winai assured the Ambassador that our desire for a shorter timeframe for democratization has registered with everyone from interim PM Surayud down. We will continue making our concerns clear to top RTG officials.
BOYCE